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FROM THE AMERICAN PEOPLE

**BUREAU FOR DEVELOPMENT, DEMOCRACY, AND INNOVATION
LOCAL, FAITH, AND TRANSFORMATIVE PARTNERSHIPS HUB**

Locally Led Development Initiatives





LIBERIA: THE POWER OF COMMUNITY

PHOTO CREDIT: NRECA INTERNATIONAL
STAFF FROM THE TOTOTA ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE AND NRECA INTERNATIONAL WORKING TOGETHER AT THE MINIGRID

At the very top of the Totota Electric Cooperative's (TEC) customer information dashboard is Joanna Kollie's name. When she switched her business from using diesel generators to electric service from the new cooperative, she quickly became the largest electricity user among the co-op's 400 members. This move allowed her to reduce her costs and help her neighbors.

"It has improved my business in so many ways," she says. "My business has so many impacts on the community ... We help people and support them, so they can move up too, so they can grow."

Through USAID's [Cooperative Development Program](#), TEC began providing electricity in 2018, built from about \$700,000 in contributions and volunteer work from U.S. co-ops and technical direction from [NRECA International](#).

It has since emerged as a shining example of a successful local utility in sub-Saharan Africa, recently earning the designation as only the second licensed, independent electric service provider in Liberia. After just three years, the co-op can cover all its operating expenses, and boasts a stellar payment rate of more than 98% from its consumer-members.

"The reason why people join the cooperative is because light is life. Light brings success," says Joseph Scott, the co-op's board president and a small-business owner. "Because of light in Totota today ... we have success in the community."



PHOTO CREDIT: NRECA INTERNATIONAL
JOANNA KOLLIE, ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE MEMBER AND BUSINESS OWNER.

The availability of power after dark has allowed businesses to stay open later, increasing revenues and providing more service to customers.

“Now we stay out late,” says Henry Williams, who owns a small grocery store in Totota. “When we didn’t have electricity, by 6:00, 7:00 or 8:00 at night, people would go home. But, because of electricity, people are still out here until 1:00 or 2:00 a.m.”

TEC runs on a solar-powered minigrid system. In August, NRECA International sent a team to help repair and improve the system. This resulted in a more resilient system and lower costs for members. But ultimately, the co-op’s success comes down to the people of Totota.

“It does take dedication and some vision on the part of the community itself to know that it’s possible,” says NRECA International vice president Dan Waddle. “And it takes real leadership. In this community, the co-op has been fortunate to have leaders who have been fair-minded and dedicated and worked in the best interest of their membership.”

For Kollie, the co-op is fueling her hopes for the future.

“My hope is to see the community grow,” she says. “We hope that the electricity will be expanded to all the communities, so that our brothers there can also benefit and can also be happy about it, like we are enjoying it, like we are benefiting from it. That’s my wish.”

About the Author: Zuraidah Hoffman is the International Communications Manager at the [National Rural Electric Cooperative Association \(NRECA\) International](#). USAID partners with NRECA International through the [Cooperative Development Program](#).

COLOMBIA: YOU GLOW, GIRL



PHOTO CREDIT: PEACE CORPS
A CAMP LEADER ORGANIZING MATERIALS FOR A WORKSHOP

Yesterday was International Day of the Girl, a day to empower and uplift adolescent girls. Peace Corps advances this goal in communities around the world with “[Girls Leading Our World](#),” or GLOW. GLOW Camps aim “to increase young women’s civic engagement; to foster self-esteem, leadership and communication skills, goal setting and decision making abilities; and to increase awareness about health and sexuality issues.”

In Colombia, after Peace Corps Volunteers were evacuated in March 2020 due to COVID, Peace Corps/Colombia sought to adapt the approach to still achieve impact at the community level. With input from Peace Corps/Washington and approval from USAID Colombia, Peace Corps/Colombia staff pivoted from relying on Volunteer grants to support their GLOW program and designed and implemented a Training of Trainers for GLOW camp leaders instead. These leaders identified areas where they wanted increased skills and knowledge to help them better design, implement, and manage GLOW activities. Peace Corps/Colombia then organized a workshop to address those areas, including: project design and management; asset-based community development; project budgeting; NGO management and leadership; intercultural competence; diversity and inclusion; and sexual and reproductive health and rights.

Former campers also proved essential in adapting the program. Now camp leaders, they participated in the workshop and developed virtual trainings, social media posts and campaigns, launching a magazine, plans for GLOW radio, and virtual regional conferences, thus ensuring a bright future for GLOW.

USAID supported this activity through the [Small Project Assistance Program](#) (SPA), a longstanding partnership with the Peace Corps.



LOCAL PRIVATE SECTOR PARTNERS GENERATE ENDURING RESULTS

PHOTO CREDIT: EQUAL EXCHANGE
COOPERATIVE MEMBERS TAKING PART IN A TRAINING

The following is an excerpt from a [recent blog post on Marketlinks](#): Emily Varga, a Cooperative Business Specialist for the [Local, Faith and Transformative Partnerships Hub](#) (LFT Hub) in USAID’s Bureau for Development, Democracy and Innovation, shared her insights on the value add of partnerships with the local private sector.

“There is a history of USAID valuing engagement with local private sector actors because they are drivers of long-term, sustainable development results,” said Varga. “The local private sector is rooted in communities and invested in local markets, but beyond that there are social ties and social motivations at play that incentivize the local private sector to remain committed to their communities.”

In USAID’s Local, Faith and Transformative Partnerships Hub, Varga supports cooperatives and credit unions, which she describes as “democratically-run, member-owned businesses” that require member equity and social capital from their local communities to be sustainable enterprises. “There are mutually reinforcing economic incentives for these businesses to sustain presence and expand market linkages in their communities,” she explains.

Varga said many local cooperatives have contributed to the needs of their communities in response to COVID-19 in locations where governments or donor organizations could not adequately respond. “In Mexico, we’ve seen agricultural cooperatives provide food supplies and basic goods to their community members. In Uganda, we’ve seen health cooperatives set up SMS communication channels to ensure formal and accurate health communication was disseminated to rural villages. In Guatemala, credit unions are working with their members to ensure there is adequate personal protective equipment (PPE) for all community-level health workers,” said Varga.

“So these local cooperatives are vested in their communities and their communities are vested in them,” said Varga.

[Read the full blog on Marketlinks.](#)

ANNOUNCEMENTS

TOMORROW! October 13 (9:00-10:00 AM ET) - Is it Locally Led? Tools to Advance Localization:

The LEAF and USAID's Locally Led Development Checklist: Are you seeking to make your work more locally led? Join us tomorrow to learn more about tools available to support USAID partners and USAID Missions advance locally led development in your work, how you might apply them, and how you can contribute to strengthening them [Join the event](#).



The Power of Principles: Do you know there are more than 3 million cooperatives around the world, and that all of them share the same principles! By putting values into action, these businesses are a force for inclusive development. Learn more from USAID's work in Madagascar with the [National Cooperative Business Association CLUSA International](#) (NCBA CLUSA). [Watch the video](#).

Youth in the Driver's Seat: In Zimbabwe, [Local Works](#) is creating a program by, for, and with young people. For the latest on the program, [check out this video](#).



Local Private Sector Partners Generate Enduring Results: How do USAID partnerships with the local private sector compare to those with the global private sector? Hear from USAID Cooperative Business Specialist Emily Varga and others. [Read the article](#).

After the IPCC Report, What's Next If You Want to Fund Climate Solutions? According to the Accountability Council: start with listening to communities. Community-led solutions are essential to tackling the climate crisis. [Read the article](#).



@USAIDConnects Celebrates Cooperative Month: We want to see your Cooperative Month tweets! Follow along on Twitter, and tag us or use the hashtag #LeadWithLocal for a chance to be featured. [Check it out](#).

PARTNER WITH THE LFT HUB

Locally Led Development Initiatives are part of the [Local, Faith, and Transformative Partnerships](#) (LFT) Hub.

The LFT Hub focuses on strengthening USAID's ability to partner with non-traditional and diverse actors including local, faith-based, and community organizations; schools and hospitals; minority-serving institutions; foundations; diaspora communities; cooperatives; and volunteer organizations. Learn more about how LFT is harnessing the power of partnerships through the following:

- [American Schools and Hospitals Abroad](#) (ASHA)
- [Faith and Neighborhood Partnerships](#) (FBNP)
- [Locally Led Development Initiatives](#) (LLDI)
- [Minority Serving Institutions](#) (MSI)
- [New Partnerships Initiative](#) (NPI)

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